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Sen. Thomas C. Alexander, Chairman
State Regulation of Public Utilities Review Committee
PO Box 142
Columbia, South Carolina 29202

November 14, 2008

Dear Senator Alexander,

I just came across the State Regulation of Public Utilities Review Committee request for comments on energy and energy policies that are due by Monday, November 17th. I have some thoughts that I hope can be considered, though they are not as specific as you are seeking.

I heard Dr. James B. Atkins, president of Regulatory Heuristics and a former member of the S.C. Public Service Commission, speak at an Energy Forum sponsored by Claflin University and USC's College of Engineering and Computing in September. He said that South Carolina was one of the earliest states in the country to provide for "decoupling" by utilities, yet South Carolina utilities do not take advantage of it.

I have heard a utility representative say "We like to see the meter spinning." I saw a program on public television the other day about nuclear power in South Carolina. A utility representative on the panel said, near the end of the program, that the nuclear power they were advocating for was going to be profitable for them. I have heard utilities say, "We've tried to interest people in energy-efficiency, look at what we've invested, and see how small the response has been...", but I don't think that a business that profits from selling a product is the best entity to convince people to reduce their use of that product.

These times call for serious efforts to conserve as much as possible and be as efficient as possible. Our system does not seem to be set up to help us make progress in this area. I don't presume to know where the fix needs to be for South Carolina, whether or not it's within the Public Service Commission, or the legislature or elsewhere, but there are other states that are doing a much better job at conservation and energy efficiency. If the deliberations of your committee do not focus on how to optimize conservation and efficiency in South Carolina, please endeavor to see that this need is addressed elsewhere.

Thank you for your consideration,



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I am not interested in providing oral testimony